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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 003017

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER TU

SUBJECT: TURKEY: MHP'S BRIEF MOMENT OF NOTORIETY

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner, for Reasons 1.4 (b ,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Opposition Nationalist Action Party (MHP) members are quietly distancing themselves from the words of their colleague in parliament, Osman Durmus, who sharply criticized Chief of the General Staff General Buyukanit. MHP will wisely keep itself at arm's length from direct attacks against the military as it continues to negotiate a path made more difficult by airstrikes that take the wind out of MHP's most reliable sail. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) After a speech in which General Buyukanit claimed that the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) had become legalized and politicized (through the entrance into parliament of the Democratic Society Party, DTP), MHP MP Osman Durmus declared the CHOD's words tantamount to a confession of failure and demanded his resignation. MHP MP (Ankara) Mehmet Ekinci echoed his challenge.

¶3. (C) Subsequently, party chairman Devlet Bahceli spoke favorably of Buyukanit. Other MHP MPs have either supported Buyukanit, or kept their dissatisfaction out of the public eye. Izmir deputy Erdal Sipahi publicly suggested Turkey should draw lessons from Buyukanit's speech. MHP Vice Chairman Oktay Vural told us that "obviously" Durmus was not speaking for the party; he pointed to Bahceli's speech as evidence that MHP has no interest in having the CHOD resign. He did not, however, expect Durmus to face any consequences. Vural also implied he might have some reservations about military leadership, but declined to go into specifics. He emphasized the communication between his party and the military is quite robust (even pointing out that a phone call received during the meeting was from the military seeking MHP views). Ankara deputy Tugrul Turkes (son of godfather of the Turkish nationalist movement, Alparslan Turkes) laughed, "Osman certainly wasn't speaking for me!" Turkes claims to feel genuine unease regarding the personal security of MPs while DTP and its "live bombs" are in parliament; he is unambiguous that DTPers are terrorists as much as any PKK member.

¶4. (C) COMMENT. Durmus sticking his neck out to that degree is unusual for a party known for its high degree of internal discipline. Although Durmus' party disavows his call for the CHOD's resignation, the lack of consequences for him indicates either that internal party business will remain internal, or that his words were not entirely odious to the

party leadership. Durmus' statement helps MHP in two ways: it recognizes that the terrorists are part of the military's *raison d'etre*; and it links an admission of failure to a position -- the TGS Chief -- that must remain infallible. Security issues were one of the few topics on which MHP could profitably profile itself against the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). The weekend's airstrikes obviate MHP's condemnation of inaction and have moved MHP back out of the spotlight. END COMMENT.

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